



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/96/9

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

(14)

AMBASAID NA HEIREANN

(202) 462-3939

EMBASSY OF IRELAND
2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008CONFIDENTIALIMMEDIATE (THURSDAY MORNING)SECURE FAX NO: SF6

12 JANUARY 1994

TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON

FOR ASST SECRETARY O HUIGINN FROM M COLLINS

RE: ADAMS VISA

1. Further to your conversation with Ambassador Gallagher, I met with Nancy Soderberg, Special Assistant to President Clinton and NSC Staff Director, at the White House this morning. I explained to Ms Soderberg that my interest was to establish, for information purposes, current US thinking on the question of a visa for Gerry Adams, if and when he should apply for one to attend the Conference on Northern Ireland in New York at the end of the month organised by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy.
2. Ms Soderberg said that no application for a visa had yet been received from Adams although they were expecting one, possibly on Friday. The question of how the US should respond to such an application has already been the subject of some preliminary thinking both in the NSC and in the State Department. It was, however, clear from Ms Soderberg's comments that the matter will need to be considered further and that no decision in any event would be taken until the President (who will eventually take the decision) and party returned from Europe on Sunday next. She also envisaged further conversations with us and with the British.
3. On the visa issue, Ms Soderberg said that it was her view that Adams had done nothing to justify a waiver. She did not feel that they could go to the President at this stage and get his agreement to one. Her view was that to date, Adams had given

- 2 -

"no tangible demonstration" of a commitment to the peace process and an ending to the campaign of violence. She said that Arafat, who was also subject to a visa exclusion, went a lot further than Adams had done before he finally secured his waiver.

4. On specific point of detail, and in response to my request for clarification, she said that Adams, as an excluded person, would require a waiver each time he wished to come to the United States. Thus, if admitted on this occasion to attend the New York Conference, he would still require a waiver for all future occasions that he wished to visit the US. In that sense it was technically possible to issue a visa for the New York Conference on a once off basis, without prejudice to any future application. (The point was made to me elsewhere that for each and every occasion that former Israeli PM Begin came to the United States, a waiver had to be issued.)
5. Soderberg expressed a concern, however, that if Adams was allowed in for the New York Conference, he might come and do nothing to justify the issue of the waiver. The US would then have given up "one of our biggest carrots" over him. She said that she was not convinced at this stage that the issue of a visa "would move the process in the right direction" which was their "overriding" concern. Moreover, the US did not want "to look ridiculous", in the light of the strong line by the President in the Dinkins letter. At the time of the Dinkins letter, and in view of the Clinton campaign promise, she said that she had taken a hard look at the evidence to justify the President's conclusion that Adams "had engaged in terrorist activity". She said that this evidence was convincing.
6. Soderberg confirmed that the British view is that Adams needs to renounce violence and take some concrete steps toward the peace process before he is issued with a visa. While formally saying that it is a matter for the US authorities, they are not shy about expressing this viewpoint. She did not know whether this specific matter had arisen in the conversation between the President and PM Major in Brussels or in a separate meeting which Christopher had with Hurd.
7. Soderberg said that, notwithstanding the visa issue, she personally felt that it might be time for the US to talk to Adams and Sinn Fein "in order to increase the confidence level of Sinn Fein in the peace process". When I asked her at what level this might be done she said that she thought that it might be at Embassy level (presumably either Dublin or London). She felt that this might be a natural follow up to

- 3 -

developments. She cited in this context the British Government's continuing commitment to maintaining their links with Sinn Fein. She also mentioned the Government's decision not to renew Section 31. She emphasised that she had not discussed this with anyone else at the NSC, nor had she mentioned it to the British. She was concerned that our conversation on this should remain private (I reassured her on this point). She was aware that such a step would be controversial, indeed more controversial than the visa issue. It could not/would not remain secret. It would need to be balanced by also talking to other parties. She was not sure whether a move in this direction would meet with approval but it was something she would continue to mull over. Up to now, US officials have not spoken to Sinn Fein on foot of a self-imposed ban mirroring that of the two Governments.

8. Soderberg said that she understood that in a conversation between Kennedy and Hume in Boston that Hume had advocated a visa for Adams. She was keen to hear directly from Hume on this issue and was seeking to contact him.
9. Soderberg emphasised, as she did with the Ambassador yesterday, that they would like to have our input on these issues as soon as possible. In a reference to the Dinkins letter, she promised that any such private views that we would like to offer would not end up in public correspondence!
10. On a somewhat separate matter, Soderberg wondered whether the British should not be giving more clarification to Sinn Fein regarding the Joint Declaration and enquired whether there was any step the US might usefully take to encourage the British to do so.

END

71